

Testimony concerning bill HB 6519

First let me introduce myself. My name is David Merrill. I live in Branford. I have a masters degree in Human Nutrition from the University of Bridgeport and I have been working with GMO Free CT for about a year. I am the main organizer and founder Label GMO Foods CT Meetup on Meetup.com.

As a nutritionist, I think it's important we know what is in our food.

Currently, food in the United States can be genetically modified and sold without the consumer having any way of knowing it because it isn't labeled as genetically modified. I have a right to know what I'm eating. If I choose not to eat foods that are genetically modified, I currently don't have many options. I can avoid all the foods that are on the market that are genetically modified; corn, soy, canola, sugar beats, cotton seed oil, Hawaiian papaya, green and yellow squash; but without labeling this is a daunting task. Corn, soy, sugar beats (a source of sugar) are ubiquitous in the U. S. food supply. About 70% of our food supply contains GMOs. Most processed foods contain one or more of these ingredients. If one is strict, avoiding meat that comes from animals fed GMO crops is also desirable. As you can see from the list, without labeling, maintaining a GMO free diet is very difficult and one can never be sure.

Part of my schooling at University of Bridgeport involved learning how proteins work. Proteins are made of complex molecules. These molecules contain positive and negative charges that cause them to fold in intricate configurations or shapes. So, each type of protein has what is analogous of its own chemical fingerprint. Their shape determines how they react chemically in the body, what other molecules they can attach to and how they can be broken down in our bodies. Genetic modification can change these shapes. In other words, it may change how our bodily systems see them, react to them and process them. Since testing in humans has been limited, we don't know how are bodies react to genetically modified foods.

But, you're probably asking why one would go to such lengths to avoid genetically modified foods, if they're safe, according to the FDA.

Since little testing has been done on GMOs and the manufacturers of GM seeds restrict testing, it's impossible for anyone to say they are safe for sure. In fact, the FDA left their safety up to the manufacturers and doesn't regulate them at all. I've viewed Jeffrey Smith's film, Genetic Roulette and seen him speak in person. After hearing what happens to pigs when fed GM corn, I had a revelation. I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis about 8 years ago. The symptoms exhibited by the pigs was very similar to my own. When the pigs were returned to a diet containing non-GM corn, their symptoms subsided.

This revelation is what made me get involved with the labeling movement in Connecticut and stop eating GM sourced food.

Gastrointestinal illnesses have been on the rise in the U. S. for some time. Is this caused by GM foods? We don't know. There hasn't been enough testing of GM foods on human populations to know that. There are probably a number of factors involved, but the experience of the pigs, for me, was enough to try to avoid GM food.

There are many countries that already have labeling of GMOs, among them all the countries in Europe and China. In these countries people already have the right to know what's in their food. Please support and pass bill HB 6519 and give that right to the people of Connecticut.

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